

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 38 (1974)
Heft: [4]

Artikel: How to live with your environment
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-942077>

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HOW TO LIVE WITH YOUR ENVIRONMENT

To get along in this world, we must understand what goes on around us, and we must know how to deal with each new situation as it arises. Understanding and skills for using our knowledge—these two give us the power to live successfully with our environment.

We do not live within a vacuum. We function on this earth, which has atmosphere, climate, weather, plants and animals. At the same time we try to go about our business in a world of people and of man-made things and ideas. Success in living depends on our understanding of this environment — understanding what it does to us and understanding what we can do about it.

To understand our environment, we must face this fact: the people of this country are born in debt. They are born in debt to the Government, the State, County and local Governments and all other taxing departments. Everything that they earn, everything that they buy is taxed; and in this way they are compelled to pay this debt. Every pay cheque shows deductions that represent payments on this debt, and so does every receipted bill for clothing, food and shelter. Our financial structure puts pressure upon both men and women to earn their own keep and to get ahead of their debts, people acquire skills that have a commercial value. They also spend much of their time and energy in trying to get so far out of debt that others will be in debt to them. So they open bank accounts. They take out insurance; they buy stocks, bonds, mortgages, real estate, business partnerships, and other evidences of indebtedness. The more property they own, the safer they feel. They find security in their securities. This makes them, as they put it—independent.

To live with your environment, you need friends, real friends. You cannot buy friendship, but you can make it. Associate yourself with people who bring you out. Some people inspire a style. They make you witty or thoughtful or generous or sensible. They make you more like the person you want to be. Seek out persons and cultivate their friendship. Do what you can for them and let them do things for you. You will find that your greatest social security lies in your friendships.

Our western culture pattern makes specific demands upon us—demands that often appear to be conflicting but which must be satisfied if we are to get along with our environment. It is obvious that we are expected to earn our living and so acquire skills for which other people will value us. I advise ambitious young men and women to acquire many skills, for each new skill multiplies the others. Pay no attention to the sneer, "Jack of all trades and master of none." A large part of success in living depends upon mastery of many techniques. The more techniques

you have at your fingertips, the more strings to your bow, the better will be your chances of hitting the centre circle in your target.

The western way of life puts pressure on us to be competitive, co-operative, and efficient. Competition is often thought of as evil. This attitude represents a misvaluation of competition. Actually competitiveness is a normal aspect of human behaviour. All people are competitive, a true friend realises that the way to a man's heart is through his ego. Our society puts a premium on competitive behaviour; but wisdom sets the limits.

Co-operation is the ability to get along with other people. In a society as highly integrated as ours, this is probably the most important skill that a person can acquire. Fortunately this ability can be learned. In dispelling fear of people and self-consciousness, our educational methods work two ways at once. Children are taught to love their neighbours, to co-operate, and to share in possessions and experiences. They are taught to be loyal to their families, to be good team-mates, to be good sports, and to be tolerant and even considerate of others. Those who learn these techniques, as well as the ideals that relate them pleasantly to others, are the lucky ones.

(From David Herald Finks' Book "Be Your Real Self")

—W.R.

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